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ABSTRACT

Activities commonly associated with outdoor adventure education can be used effectively in therapy for couples. The adventure education concepts of risk, trust, fear, anxiety, dependence/independence, problem solving, and intimacy are all dealt with in therapy and enrichment experiences for couples. While the outdoor environment has a tremendous impact, many adventure activities can be adapted for the indoor therapy room. Directions are provided for six adventure activities for pairs and eight for groups. The activities require problem solving and cooperation and include games and initiatives such as "Stand-up" (pairs grab hands, place feet together, and attempt to stand up simultaneously), "Pyramid" (the group forms a symmetrical pyramid and attempts to walk forward), and "Four Pointer" (groups of seven arrange themselves so that they have only four points of contact with the floor). A list of seven resources is included. (JHZ)

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THE STRATEGIC USE OF ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES WITH COUPLES

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INTRODUCTION

Research shows that adventure activities are effective in enhancing self concepts, locus of control, problem solving abilities and physical wellness with adolescents. Very little research had been done to show how an adventure approach to treatment could be effective couples. However, the concepts of risk, trust, fear, anxiety, dependence/independence, problem-solving, and intimacy, all fit issues dealt with in couples therapy and enrichment experiences. How might adventure activities blend with therapy and enrichment for couples?

This presentation will demonstrate how activities commonly associated with Outward Bound, Project Adventure, and other outdoor adventure programs may be used effectively in a strategic therapeutic approach with couples. Working from an Ericksonian utilization model, (Bacon, 1984) this presentation will hit the highlights of using adventure activities as therapeutic metaphors.

One of the most exciting aspects of a strategic approach to adventure activities is the utilization of the therapy room. While the out-of-doors has a tremendous impact, it may be a sufficient condition but not necessary to achieve the desired effects adventure activities may provide.

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This presentation is 'how to" from the "hands on" perspective. Many of the 30 minutes will be spent doing some of the activities that have been adapted into the therapy room. All participants should expect to leave the session having had some experience with adventure activities.

PROCESS AND EVALUATION

Tips and topics for presenting/debriefing

1. Traditional presenting/debriefing

Go 'rounds

Focus of debriefing: Leadership, sex roles, competition/ cooperation, problem solving, risk, commitment, etc.

2. Strategic presenting/debriefing

Questions?, comments?, recommendations?, insults?!?

EXERCISES

Couples

MIRROR: Pairs, standing about two feet apart, one partner starts moving hands, arms, face, etc. while the other partner follows; then switch.

SIT-DOWN. Pairs grab hands, put feet together and sit down so that buttocks touch the floor at the same time.

ROW-BOAT STRETCH Once the pair is sitting down, hold hands, put feet (stretched out) together and SLOWLY AND GENTLY push and pull each other to get a nice and easy back stretch.

STAND-UP After stretching, have the pair try to stand up together. Remember, buttocks must come off the floor at the same time and feet must stay in contact.

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GOTCHA: Have the couple take a 12 foot rope or piece of nylon webbing and place an end around their waists, holding on to the rope with only one hand. With the rope taut, the object is to cause the other person to fall off balance. Feet should remain at shoulder width and not in front of each other. It's also against the rules to wrap the rope around the wrist. Try three falls out of five. PROPS

TOE-TAPPING: Boots and heels are taken off for this game!! Pairs face each other. The object is to try and tap (lightly touch) the partners toes with your toe. If you do, score one. Try for three out of five. NO STOMPING!

Group

MOON BALL: Take a beach ball, throw it into the group and see how many times the group can hit it without anyone hitting it twice in a row. Try for a record: 10, 25, 50, even a 100 times in a row. Set a world's record! PROPS

COUNT OFF: Have the group try to count to 10 (or 15 or however many persons are in the group) out loud so that no one says a number at the same time. When a number is spoken simultaneously, start over.

WAMPUM: In a group of 5-12, place one member in the center so that all members are within reach of the rolled up newspaper which the center person is holding. The object of the game is for the center person to hit ("wamp") a circle person before they can call another circle person's name. If the circle person calls a name of someone not present or calls the name of the center person, they become "it." Someone in the circle starts the game by calling another circle person's name. The center person attempts to "wamp" the called person before they can call another name. PROPS

TANGLE (KNOTS) The group (5-8 members) forms a tight circle (shoulder to shoulder) and each member puts forth their right hand, grabbing another's right hand. Left hands are then outstretched to grab another person's left hand. The object is to untangle without breaking a hand clasp. If the group has gotten frustrated after what looks to be an unsuccessful attempt, allow them to break one handclasp.

PYRAMID: Ask the group to form a symmetrical pyramid. Watch out for possible falls from persons achieving a height of four feet or more! See if they can walk forward in the pyramid.

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FOUR POINTER: In groups of seven, have each group arrange themselves so that they have only four points of contact with the ground (floor). Each hand or foot counts as a point of contact. The object is to walk 25-30 feet once this arrangement has been achieved. WATCH FOR POSSIBLE FALLS. SPOTTING IS NECESSARY. A race is fun if you have more than one group. If you have only five or nine persons in the group, try three or five points of contact. EXPERIMENT!

ALL ABOARD (TEAM ON A T-SHIRT): Using a two foot square or a T-shirt, have the group stand on the object for five seconds without touching the floor or carpet around it. Make the activity challenging but temper with compassion. A two foot square can support up to 15 people! SPOTTING IS CRITICAL! WATCH FOR FALLS. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE! PROPS

TRADIN' PLACES (TP Shuffle): Using a 2'X 6" X 10' board or an equal space taped to the floor, have the group line up along the object so that half the group faces the other half. Ask the group to try and trade places without falling off. If a member falls off, either start over or count the number of mishaps and add a penalty to the total time it took to successfully complete the activity. PROPS

RESOURCES

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